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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the relationships between adult learning theory and the question "Why am I?" or life mission. Three sets of interviews were conducted, each involving a comprehensive interview with each of five people who had made a significant contribution to society over their individual lifetimes. The first set elicited information about the development of individual life mission, the second developed an understanding of the relationship between life mission and learning, and the third was used to validate, revise, and enrich conclusions proposed about theoretical relationships. Personal journals were also kept and analyzed. Influences upon life mission development could be categorized as having socially constructed, biological, or spiritual origins. Several connections between life mission and adult learning were identified. The stronger and more focused a person's life mission, the stronger and more focused was the learner's self-direction. The learning process could cause adults to revise or to reinforce their mission. Life mission sat at the center of a person's life. Implications for adult education were as follows: educators should demonstrate the relevance of the material to the learner; the environment should facilitate transformative learning; the teacher should develop his/her own mission; and resonance should be found between the learner's and the community's missions. (Contains 94 references.) (YLB)

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ED 408 440

LIFE MISSION AND ADULT LEARNING

An Exploratory Study Examining Theoretical Relationships and their Impact upon Adult Education

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Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the
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INTRODUCTION

In the musical "Les Miserables" (Kretzmer, 1986) escaped convict Jean Valjean is faced with a dilemma. Discovering that another man has been mistaken for him, Valjean must decide either to reveal himself, thus setting the innocent man free but thereby assuring his own return to prison, or to remain silent, thereby condemning the other to an unwarranted lifetime of misery. Valjean plaintively cries out, "If I speak I am condemned. If I stay silent I am damned." He asks himself "Who am I? Can I condemn this man to slavery? Pretend I do not see his agony." He continues, "How can I ever face my fellow man? How can I ever face myself again. My soul belongs to God I know. I made that bargain long ago. He gave me hope when hope was gone. He gave me strength to journey on." He

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finally answers his own question, "Who am I? Who am I? I'm Jean Valjean!"

The question "Who am I?" challenges, perhaps even haunts, each of us as we continue upon our life journey. Within the "Who am I?" question is embedded another one, equally seminal, which is, "Why am I?" Every person seeks the answer to this question in his or her own way. We draw conclusions about "Why am I?" through the years and incorporate them into our meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991), often reifying them. "Why am I?" accepted self-knowledge becomes problematic, however, when the events of life cause us to question this embedded, taken-for-granted knowledge about the world and about ourselves. It is during these times that we question our underlying assumptions about what we believe to be true. This questioning is fundamental to adult learning (Jarvis, 1993; Mezirow, 1991).

The question "Why?" is at the heart of much of human learning (Jarvis, 1993). Every human seeks the meaning of her or his existence. All learning begins with experience (Jarvis, 1993), and every experience has only the meaning that any individual gives to it. It is through the lens each person views the world that experience is given meaning.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between adult learning theory and the question "Why am I?"

For purposes of this study, the term "mission" was used provisionally to represent the question, "Why am I?" While the term "mission" has various overtones, here it is defined simply as the set of assumptions each person holds about his or her life purpose, reason for being, or what he or she is to do with life.

While purpose, calling, vocation, or mission have been discussed by various authors, the concept of mission has been virtually overlooked in studies of its relation to adult learning theory. Searches of the literature on mission reveal many references to organizational mission but little regarding personal mission. More specifically, research considering the relationship of teaching, mission, and adult learning was not found.

The question "Why am I?" has been described as an individual's purpose (Leider, 1985), mission (Covey, 1989; Stephan, 1989), vocation (Rehm, 1987, 1990), right livelihood (Sinetar, 1987), or calling (Rehm, 1987, 1990). Each has different connotations. As the "Why am I?" question is at the core of human seeking, it also has spiritual roots.

From the very beginnings of adult education, theorists have recognized that learning is at the core of

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humanity. Eduard Lindeman, called the "father of adult education in the United States" (Gessner, 1956, p. 12), said that the purpose of adult education is "to put meaning into the whole of life" (1926, p. 7). And to find meaning, says Lindeman, there is only one guide, "meaning must reside in the things for which people strive, the goals which they set for themselves, their wants, needs, desires and wishes" (p. 13).

Lindeman might have had the mission of adult learners in mind when he said,

> In what areas do most people appear to find life's meaning? We have only one pragmatic guide: meaning must reside in the things for which people strive, the goals which they set for themselves, their wants, needs, desires and wishes. (p. 13)

John Dewey also thought that educators should work with learners to develop their purposes. He believed that a person could have a number of callings. An individual might be called to a career, to be a parent, or to have friends. He also defined vocations broadly, and recognized the power of education, through vocational development, to influence. Eighty years ago Dewey said that:

> To find out what one is fitted to do and to secure an opportunity to do it is the key to happiness. Nothing is more tragic than failure to discover one's true business in life, or to find that one has drifted or

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been forced by circumstance into an uncongenial calling. (1916, p. 308)

> *A calling is also of necessity an organizing principle for information and ideas; for knowledge and intellectual growth* [Italics added]. It provides an axis which runs through an immense diversity of detail; it causes different experiences, facts, items of information to fall into order with one another.(1916, p. 309)

To Dewey, education and mission were related. Educators should assist learners to find their purposes and to fulfill their highest potentialities (1916, p. 309).

Although the relationship of mission to adult learning and the relationship of teaching mission to adult learning has gone unstudied, the relationship of mission to the teaching profession has been studied.

There have been studies related to teaching satisfaction (Hoversten, 1992), qualities of outstanding teachers (Adams, 1992), the relationship between dedication/commitment and teacher excellence (Duval, 1990), the meaning of teaching (McKinney, 1993), the calling of teaching (Buford, 1991; Serow, 1994; Serow & Eaker, 1992), and teaching and vocation (Hansen, 1994). While these studies help clarify the relationship of personal life purposes and the teaching profession, they do not address the relationship of mission and learning theory.

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Other authors (Apps, 1989; Collins, 1991) have addressed the importance that having a sense of mission has for teachers. Brookfield (1990) suggests that a "critical rationale" (p. 15) provides teachers meaning in the midst of ambiguity and unpredictability. A critical rationale is a "....set of values, beliefs, and convictions about the essential forms and fundamental purposes of teaching" (p. 15).

Despite the lack of study about mission's relationship to learning, mission may be, however, an unspoken assumption underlying much adult learning theory. Knowles' (1990) assumptions of adult learners may presume personal purpose. To Jarvis (1987), all learning begins with experience. For him, no experience has meaning unless people give it meaning, and in order to give it meaning people must reflect upon the experience. When disjuncture occurs between an individual's stock of knowledge and experience there is a potential learning opportunity because it stimulates the question "why," and the person begins a quest for meaning. This "why?" question is the essence of Mezirow's disorienting dilemma (1978) and Jarvis' disjuncture because it requires individuals to look at the meaning of their own existence.

Constructivism posits that knowledge is constructed by the learner. Constructivist assumptions include the belief that meaning exists within the person, and is acquired and

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validated through social interaction (Mezirow, 1991). Following constructivist thought, it might be presumed that mission is irrelevant. Yet constructivists themselves allude to a humanness which is even deeper than socially constructed reality, and view the behavior of people as purposive and intentional (Candy, 1989).

Mezirow claims that learning always involves the line of action in which learning occurs, which has to do with "implementing the purpose and intentionality of the learner and involves the exercise of his or her conative power." Conation, to Mezirow, involves both "desire and volition, the intensity with which one wants to do something" (1991, pg. 14).

Developmental theorists have also incorporated mission concepts into their thinking. Gould's (1978, p. 78) "life dreams," Levinson's (1978, p. 91) "Dream," Sherrill's (1951) stages of soul development, Fowler's (1981, p. 290), "vocational dream," Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule's (1986 p. 16) "voice," and Cochran's (1990) phases of vocation all suggest that mission is a part of adult development.

Mission has been discussed by philosophers, psychologists, learning theorists, and theologians for centuries, and such discussion continues to this day. Yet, the literature is virtually silent about the relationship of mission to adult learning. Theory has not

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been identified addressing that relationship, nor were instances of theory relating to use of mission to facilitate adult, or any other level of, learning.

METHODS

A grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1994) approach was the analytic strategy used to analyze data in this study. Two focus groups were used to develop initial themes and interview guides for the individual interviews. Individual interviews were conducted and personal journals were collected to develop deeper themes and patterns based upon the experiences of five people who had made a significant contribution to society over their individual lifetimes. Three sets of interviews were conducted. Each set of interviews involved a comprehensive interview with each of the five individuals concerning a particular topic. The first set of interviews was designed to elicit information about the development of individual life mission, the second set was designed to develop an understanding of the relationship between life mission and learning, and the third was used to validate, revise, and enrich conclusions proposed about theoretical relationships which emerged from the first two sets of interviews. Each interview was transcribed, and after each set of five interviews was completed they were read, coded, analyzed and an interview guide was prepared for the next set of interviews. Each person was asked to keep a personal journal during the

interviewing period. The interview transcripts and journals were read and reread several times. Codes were initially derived from research questions. Once coded, categories were further analyzed until patterns or processes emerged. These themes, processes, and models illustrating them were validated and enriched through the final, or third, set of interviews conducted with each of the five interviewees. Finally, each transcribed interview and journal entries were given to the interviewed individual to check for transcribing accuracy and to encourage modification or elaboration. Individually edited transcripts were then updated and returned once more to the interviewee for additional changes if desired. Finally, themes and relationships were then amended and conclusions were finalized by reflecting upon the results of the entire set of final interviews in relationship to the data previously generated. Each individual was then presented the study finding for final review and comments.

This was an exploratory, qualitative study intended to generate theory about the relationships between life mission and adult learning. It was not designed to be a definitive inquiry, and different researchers working with the same data might arrive at at least moderately different conclusions.

Selection criteria. Five adult learners identified as having made a significant contribution to society were obtained for this study using reputational-case selection

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(Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The pool of participants were chosen from members of the Albuquerque Senior Foundation's Senior Hall of Fame. Members of the Hall of Fame are individuals over the age of 60 who have been selected because they have had a positive impact on the community's quality of life. This final list of five participants was chosen to maximize demographic, ideological, and experiential diversity of all types, including the diversity of their contribution to society over a lifetime.

The following table provides a brief summary of the five people who participated in the individual interviews.

Table 1

Individual Interview Participants

Name	Ethnicity	Gender	Vocation	Other
Loycla Burgess	A	F	Teacher	Past President AARP
Fannye Gibbs	AA	F	Beautician	Issues of race and age
Ben Hernandez	H	M	Lawyer	State Court of Appeals
David Hsi	O	M	Research Professor	Member, Board of Education
Mandy Pino	A	F	Director of Senior Information Services	Health care reform, elderly legislation

FINDINGS

How People Come To Know Their Mission

Interviews showed a wide variety of influences upon life mission development, as summarized by Figure. 1 "Influences on Life Mission." Each of the identified influences can be categorized as having either socially constructed, biological, or spiritual origins, and may be considered environmental learning variables for individual mission development.

Socially constructed influences identified by the five were the need to make a living, social issues, change in physical location, significant others either alive or dead, coaches, life roles, culture, adult education, life events, and family. Biological influences which were identified were

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biological makeup and health, and spiritual influences identified were spiritual relationship and church experience. Church experience could also be considered to fit within the socially constructed category.

Influences On Life Mission

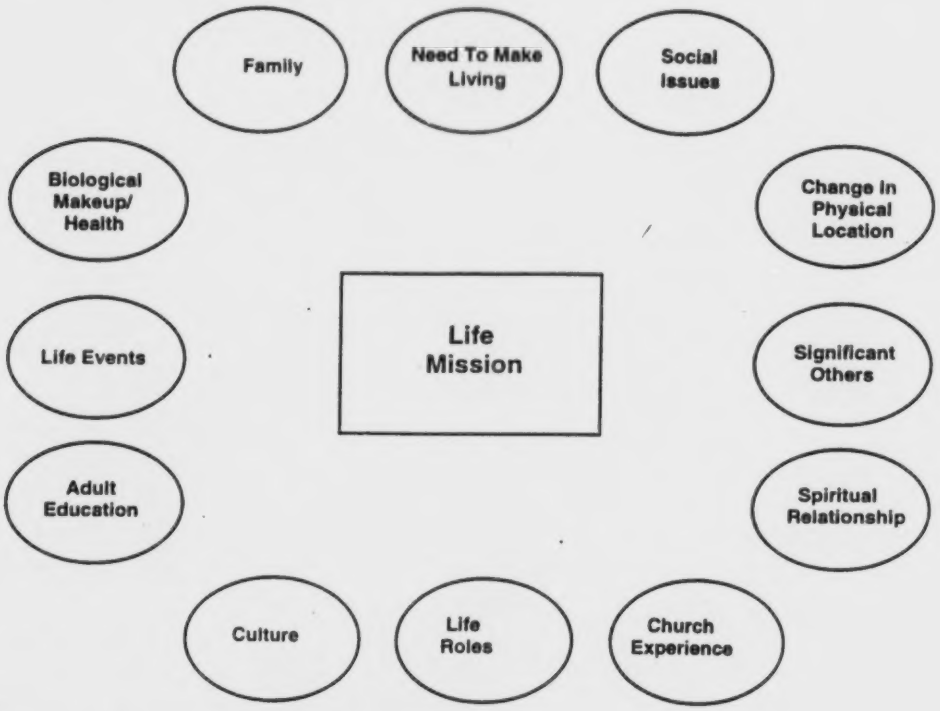

Figure 1. Influences on Life Mission

The Connections Between Mission and Adult Learning Theory

Research questions relating to mission and adult learning focused on the relationships between mission and learner self-direction, learning choices, transformative learning, adult development, and adult education. The

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interviews revealed that these concepts are intertwined with themselves and life mission. The following will briefly discuss each specific relationship.

The Relationship Between Mission, Learner Self-direction, and Meaningfulness

Self-direction is affected by a person's mission. As a person goes through life, their purposes determine in part what they are motivated to learn. Given that a person's mission may be hidden or evolving in response to life events, the immediate purposes may vary. However, the stronger and more focused the mission, the stronger the learner's motivation to learn, and the more focused the learning activities will be to fulfill the mission. Mission provides the context for the learner to pursue goal-oriented learning despite environmental exigencies which might otherwise dissuade her or him.

Life mission - what one assumes one is to do with her or his life - also provides the context for the decisions one makes about what to learn. As mission evolves or is uncovered, new learning goals are unearthed in parallel. Interestingly, this process of learning to fulfill mission can become an ever self-directing cycle as new learning spurs refocused mission which stimulates new learning activities.

The Relationship of Mission to Transformative Learning

Life mission is defined in this study as the set of

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assumptions each person holds about his or her life purpose, reason for being, or what he or she is to do with life. Transformative learning is the process of reflecting upon tacit assumptions about beliefs which were often formed in childhood to see if they are still useful in adulthood (Mezirow, 1994). The phases of personal transformation begin with a "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168-169). Since mission here is a set of assumptions and transformative learning is the process of reflecting upon tacit assumptions, it follows that the two should be related. The stories of the individuals participating in this study validate such a relationship.

The learning process can expose adults to new ideas and new possibilities for their life purposes, which can cause them to revise or reinforce their mission. Through critical reflection or new learning experiences, adults can reevaluate and/or uncover their purposes by examining their assumptions about them. This process is one in which individuals are exposed to new experiences, either willingly or unwillingly, which cause them to rethink their beliefs about their purposes. Sometimes, these new experiences simply validate an existing direction or broadened awareness of possibilities, and sometimes these new experiences dramatically change life direction.

A mission, like other tacit beliefs, controls individual motivation, actions, and desires even if it is hidden. Most

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if the five highly motivated, goal-oriented people in this study had not thought of themselves as having a "mission" prior to this study, yet upon reflection every one of them could identify a mission, to differing degrees of specificity, which had oriented their actions over a lifetime.

Although a person's basic mission (to help others, to make a mark, to promote justice and equity, e.g.) may remain stable or even unknown throughout a lifetime, assumptions about personal purpose and how that mission may actually manifest itself may change, or at the least one's perspective of the world and one's place in it might broaden. Once this perspective changes so does the person's learning focus.

The process starts with some type of disorienting dilemma. It could be general internal dissatisfaction, a disappointment, or a novel experience. Assumptions about life purpose are assessed, either tacitly or explicitly, the person's mission is evaluated, and either broadened, narrowed, changed, or essentially maintained intact. Refocused purposes then cause a refocused learning self-direction, which includes some level of motivation and refocused learning choices. The cycle is continuous as the individual continues to modify his or her mission based upon what is learned from experience. Figure 2 models this process. The degree to which assumptions about one's life

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purpose are actually modified is the similar degree to which transformative learning has occurred.

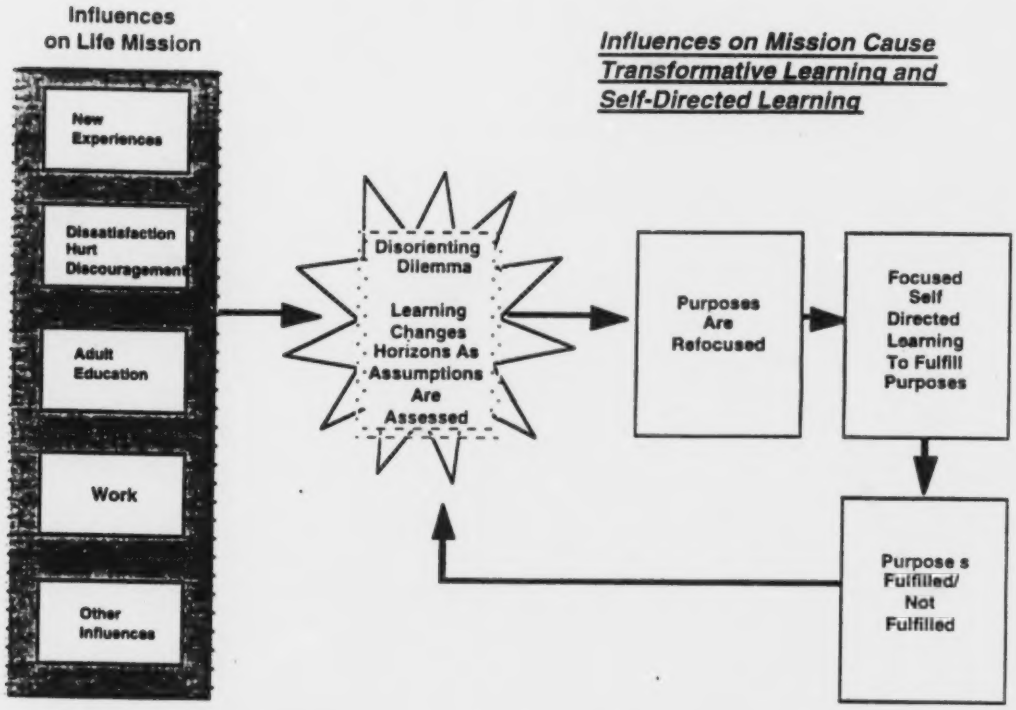

Figure 2. Influences on Mission Cause Transformative Learning and Self-directed Learning

The Impact of Mission Upon Adult Development

The purposes which dominate a period of a person's life determine the person's level of motivation to learn and the learning choices (i.e. what to learn) made as an adult.

The roles that a person plays throughout life and the events which occur during a life impact what each person comes to believe about her or his purposes. In every case in this study, the individual's life mission was initially

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formulated early in life, even though the person may not have recognized it at the time.

How those ambiguous missions manifested themselves for each person took different forms depending upon the developmental needs of each period or life. Day-to-day needs resulted in decisions which were made within the larger context of a core or life mission, and the more immediate developmental purposes. Figure 3 shows life mission sitting at the center of a person's life. From there, life's developmental tasks shape the "working mission," which may take differing forms during a lifetime. The working mission represents the more specific purposes of the period, set in the context of the core mission. Disorienting dilemmas are more likely to transform the assumptions one has about the working mission than the core mission. The assumptions underlying the core mission are deeper, at the foundation of one's stock of knowledge, and are harder to surface. The assumptions underlying the working mission are less so

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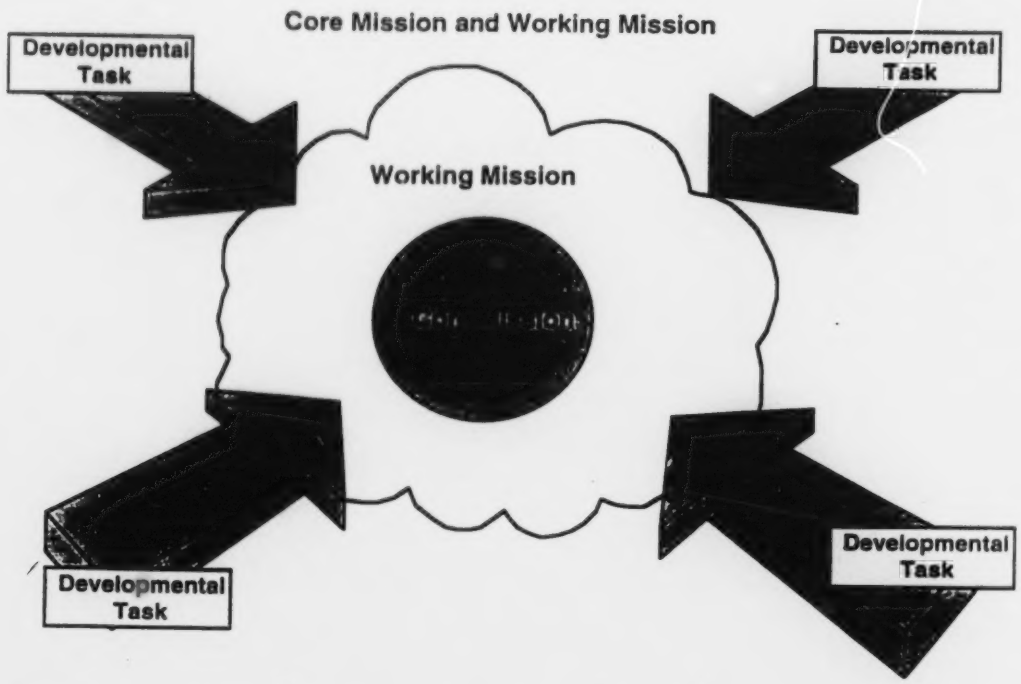

Figure 3. Core Mission and Working Mission

In summary, life, or core mission sits at the center of a person's life. From there, life's developmental tasks shape the "working mission," which may take differing forms during a lifetime. The working mission represents the more specific purposes of the period set in the context of the core mission. Although the core mission might be hidden - it might metaphorically be viewed as providing the undercurrent within the river of each person's life - it is expressed in different forms depending upon the developmental needs of each period or life. Core mission and working mission are sets of assumptions a person holds about her or his life and can be transformed through experience, although

core mission assumptions are deeper and less easily challenged or changed.

Adult Education and Life Mission

Adult education is not different substantially from other adult learning experiences which allow or even press a person to become aware of new possibilities for her life or to test new or unexamined life premises, except that it may provide greater opportunities and a safer environment. Adult education exposes people to new ideas, oftentimes places them in an environment which is quite different than they are used to but intended to encourage experimentation, and is designed to expand knowledge and awareness. Adult experiences in general may have these characteristics, which support learning about oneself and one's purpose. The more one learns about his purposes, the more his motivation to learn and his learning choices reflect them, which in turn affect future adult education and life experiences.

Summary of Relationships Between Life Mission and Adult Learning

The life stories of five people who have made a significant contribution to society show relationships of life mission to adult learning. Although the source of life mission cannot be determined empirically, a number of influences were identified which can be categorized as having either socially constructed, biological, or spiritual origins. Socially constructed influences include the need to

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make a living, social issues, change in physical location, significant others, life roles, culture, adult education, life events, and family. Biological influences include biological make-up and health. Spiritual influences include spiritual relationship and church experience. When looking back, the five interviewees could identify what influenced the development of their mission, and could verbalize their mission, but most had never thought of themselves as having a life mission.

Several connections between life mission and adult learning were identified.

1) The stronger and more focused a person's life mission, the stronger and more focused is the learner's self-direction. Mission provides a source of meaning to learning activities.

2) The learning process can cause adults to revise or to reinforce their mission. Through new learning experiences, adults reevaluate and/or uncover their purposes by examining their assumptions about them. Sometimes these new experiences validate an existing direction or broaden the awareness of possibilities, and sometimes they change life direction. Although a person's core mission may remain stable or even unknown throughout a lifetime, assumptions about personal purpose and how that mission may actually express itself may change. Once this perspective changes so does the person's learning focus. An unexamined life mission

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or a life unexposed to broader or differing beliefs may result in a relatively unchanging mission, which might be quite narrow.

3) Life, or core, mission sits at the center of a person s life. From there, life's developmental tasks shape the "working mission," which may take differing forms during a lifetime. The working mission represents the more specific purposes of the period set in the context of the core mission. Although the core mission might be hidden - it might metaphorically be viewed as providing the undercurrent within the river of each person's life - it is expressed in different forms depending upon the developmental needs of each period or life. Core mission and working mission are sets of assumptions a person holds about her or his life and can be transformed through experience, although core mission assumptions are deeper and less easily challenged or changed.

4) Adult education is not different substantially from other adult learning experiences which allow or even press a person to become aware of new possibilities for her life mission or to test new or unexamined life premises, except that it may provide a venue which is more likely to facilitate the process than everyday events might.

Figure 4 summarizes the entire set of relationships which have emerged from the data, as depicted in prior figures and discussed earlier.

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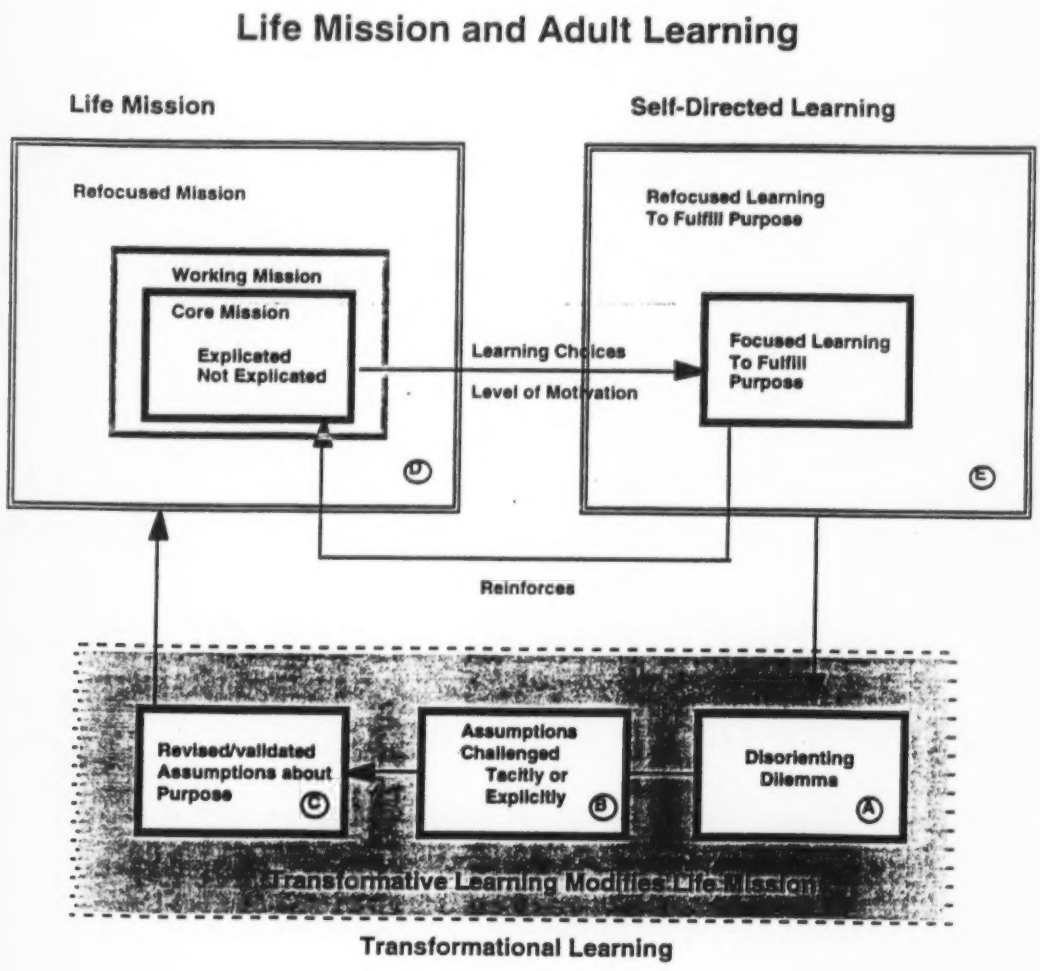

Figure 4. Life Mission and Adult Learning

The causal conditions which lead to transformative learning (A) begin with a disorienting dilemma such as a life event, an adult education experience, or a new or revised life role. At this point, assumptions about life purpose are examined, either tacitly or explicitly (B), and are revised or validated (C), leading to a similar or refocused core or working mission (D). This life mission may be explicated or

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unexplicated (clear or hidden). Life mission then provides a source of self-direction for learning choices and motivation. As mission is revised, so is learner self-direction (E). Until a disorienting dilemma (A) presents itself, mission continues to direct learning and learning continues to reinforce mission, limiting both purpose and the scope of learning. This process is constantly at work, therefore mission is constantly evolving to a greater or lesser extent depending upon the magnitude of assumptions which are revised. The core mission may remain essentially unchanged though, as the deeper assumptions about purpose are embedded deep into the individual's stock of knowledge.

An example might best explain this chart. Suppose someone recently lost her job, which would serve as a disorienting dilemma in her life (A). To that point, she had always believed that her purpose was to make a career in accounting, let's say. Her job loss forces her to re-examine the assumptions surrounding this career (B), and to revise them (C). She determines that accounting was really something that her father had always wanted her to do. She realizes that she never really wanted to pursue that profession at all. Deep down, she comes to understand that what she really wants is to teach children, to help them grow and learn (D). Unfortunately, she is not trained to be a teacher, so her working mission is to get a job in the childcare field and to help children in that capacity. At

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the same time, she decides to go back to school to become a certified teacher (E). As she continues learning in school her desire to make a difference in children's lives is reinforced as she learns more about herself and her chosen field. This continues until another disorienting dilemma forces her to review her purposes again. The cycle is continuous as people go through various levels of change.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Generally, educators can improve the learning process by recognizing that learners come with a set of assumptions about their life purposes about which they very likely are not even aware. At a minimum, educators can improve the learning process for adults by providing the means for them to understand how their life mission relates to the learning topic. Learners' missions exist at different levels, core and working, and if educators are sensitive to this they will recognize there are links not just to the learner's immediate developmental role or stage, but to the deeper forces which drive a learner to discover and live out the "Why am I?" question. This linkage would increase learner self-direction, helping the learner make meaningful learning choices and maximizing motivation. At a different level, adult educators can improve the learning process for adults by facilitating the examination of life mission itself and its associated assumptions. The growth of learners who are constrained artificially because of societal expectations and

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internalized psychological beliefs about who they are and what goals they might pursue can be facilitated.

Adult Education and Life Mission

In whatever situation, adult educators can provide the environment most likely to produce learner understanding of his or her mission. Adult education exposes people to new ideas, oftentimes places them in an environment which is quite different than they are used to but intended to encourage experimentation, and is designed to expand knowledge and awareness. Adult experiences in general may have these characteristics, which support learning about oneself and one's purpose. The more an individual learns about his purposes, the more his motivation to learn and his learning choices reflect them, which in turn affect future adult education and life experiences. There are at least four ways adult educators can facilitate the growth of learners through a life mission pedagogy: 1) by associating the purposes of the topic with the purposes of the learner, 2) by establishing a learning environment which promotes self-discovery, 3) by reflecting upon the teacher's own purposes and 4), by connecting the purposes of the institution with the purposes of the learner.

Purpose of the Learning Experience

Educators and course developers should always demonstrate the relevance of the material to the learner. Finding ways to connect the purpose of the learning

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experience and the material to the learner's life purpose goes a step further. This provides a context for the learner to make choices about the level of effort she wishes to put into the course and what learning choices she would care to pursue either within or outside the context of the class. The more closely the learner can tie the purposes of the class to her own personal purposes, the more self-directed she should be and the teacher will be required less tc impose extrinsic motivators. Given a connection between life purpose and the learning purpose, the learner will find the content more meaningful and will be more impelled to pursue related topics and activities to fulfill her purposes.

People sometimes find themselves in classes or training situations which they did not voluntarily choose, or which were demanded solely by the job or task. Naturally, it would be counter-productive to either trivialize the mission-to-self-direction process by forcing mission discussion or exercises when they are obviously out-of-place. However, when practical, trainers could help trainees find meaningfulness in the training experience by providing ways for them to make connections between the material taught and their own life purposes,

Learning Atmosphere

Adult education oftentimes draws the learner away from his typical surroundings, challenges his existing paradigms about the world and himself, and does so in an environment

which encourages experimentation with thought and action. These elements facilitate transformative learning, allowing the learner to examine his own purposes, test new ways of interpreting them, and modifying assumptions if desired. Adult education can play a particularly meaningful role in setting a supportive learning environment because there are so many social and psychological constraints to truly exploring and testing new directions otherwise. Individuals growing up in differing economic, educational, or social circumstances may have differing expectations about themselves and opportunities which are open to them. Adult education has perhaps the unique opportunity to provide an environment which allows people to see beyond their immediate situations and to consider wider prospects than they would have otherwise.

Many times this kind of learning is serendipitous. Learners find themselves in a quite different learning environment, far away from forces which would restrain assumption testing, in the midst of challenging ideas, role models, and institutions. Revelations about personal purpose might totally change life direction and subsequent learning direction. Adult educators can facilitate a deeper, more authentic orientation to one's life work - counteracting to some degree unjust existing structural constraints - by providing the venue for mission-learning.

Teacher's Own Mission Development

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It is difficult to promote deep internal passion in others when one's own life work is a hollow shell. The slick veneer of empty enthusiasm for one's profession or the material being taught is usually transparent to learners. If the educator herself cannot make the personal connection between what she is teaching and what she passionately views as a life work then students will find it more difficult to seek their own. Educators must examine their own reasons for teaching and strike out the weary reasons, the imposed reasons, and the reasons which are so far afield from real sources of passion that the connection is illusory. Having struck those out, each educator must see what remains. If there is an opportunity to find deeper sources of passion then the educator must seek her own fountainhead and "drink from the waters there" (Brookfield, 1990, p. 28). If the educator cannot find her own connections she must look until she finds her own lifework. The words of Dewey, Lindeman, Friere and Mezirow convey a spirit of commitment to causes, philosophies, and actions. The adult educator who wishes to facilitate real learner growth would do well to aspire to a life work of like devotion.

Mission of the Community

Learner's life missions are drawn from the communities where they are born, and may be fired by the communities with which they associate themselves. The key is finding the resonance between the community and the learner, thereby

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helping the learner associate his purposes with the purposes of a community. The community might represent a cause, a group of people, a profession, an institution, an association, or any community of people with common purpose. The danger of such a union is that the community might impose its own mission upon the individual. The opportunity is that the individual might find sources of meaning and purpose within herself that would otherwise go undiscovered.

Self-direction, Meaning, and Mission

The findings in this study report that the stronger and more focused a person's life mission, the stronger and more focused is the learner's self-direction, and that mission provides a source of meaning to learning activities. Life mission directs both the level of motivation to learn and the learning choices which the individual makes. Educators seeking to change the focus of the learning experience from being more teacher-directed to more learner-directed can start by helping student's illuminate their life mission, and then provide the means for them to pursue learning interests which are spawned by the dawning of new or enlarged awareness.

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